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AUTHOR Tolliver, J. Howard
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ABSTRACT

It is apparent that the circumstances and environments that surround getting an education in this generation are more complex than in any other generation. One cannot point to any one set of circumstances, curricula, or personnel and make valid generalizations about education, educators, and students. With the so called "knowledge explosion," more urbanization, revised values and standards, and more complex challenges will arise for professional educators. In the 1980's, as the school population slightly declines and the supply of teachers exceeds the demand, the profession must retool for the task of developing a viable body of practice which will stabilize the teaching profession. Some areas that will need attention and study are: teacher attitudes; student attitudes; school size; class size; inservice training; preservice training and experience; staff development; release time; staffing patterns; and course content. (Author/CJ)

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A Response to the Challenging Concept of a Redesigned Common Body of Practice in Teacher Education

by
J. Howard Tolliver
Dean's Grant Coordinator

UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
College of Education and Human Ecology

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When speaking of the lack of or the absence of a common body of knowledge, skills and values for leaders, one must not be hoodwinked into thinking that the deficit may not be a good one. The challenge in education may well be the need for diversity rather than commonality.

The suggestion that teaching is not a legitimate profession and that leaders are not as competent as lawyers, doctors or ministers is somewhat true. However, the public generally may or may not know that teachers can not and should not provide all educational services to all children. Part of the problem eminates from the ever changing role requirements for teachers.

> There are many forms of success, many forms of triumph. But there is no other success that in any shape or way approaches that which is open to most of the many men and women who have the right ideals. These are the men and women who see that it...the intimate and homely things that count most. They are the men and women who have the courage to strive for the happiness which comes only with labor and effort and self-sacrifice, and those whose joy in life springs in part from power of work and sense of duty.
>
> Theodore Roosevelt

The passage of Public Law 94-142 called for new and expanded role requirements makes Francis Keppel's statement very relevant - "Education is too importanct to be left solely to the educators". It is predicted that Public Law 94-142, like affirmative action, school desegregation, sex discrimination and other civil rights rulings, will have mixed, unpredictable blessings which often inhibit or contradict original intent.

The Supreme Court decision (1954) Brown vs. Topeka Kansas Board of Education, ruling that dejure segregation was unconstitutional and that separate but equal segregated schools were inherently unequal by their separateness, marked a major departure from the traditional role the federal government played in American life. The case influenced a change in authority over educational policy from "states rights" to federal intervention.

Coleman and Kelly (1976) found that today's schools in major cities were in a state of confusion and disorganization. They attribute part of the confusion and disorganization to the Supreme Court decision of 1954, and the "student rights movement of the 1960's; a signal of the public's confidence in the schools as being unable to maintain discipline, and orderliness. Other factors caused the public to sustain their disssatisfaction with urban schools was the decline in school achievement, increased truancy, and the increase in school and street crime.

Additional factors contribute to the state of confusion and disorganization in schools, such as: the national increased cost of education, classroom disruptions, controversy over textbooks, overcrowding, teacher strikes, bankrupt cities and school districts. Added to that is the landmark Public Law 94-142 (the Education for all Handicapped Children Act).

There are two basic issues that need to be addressed when considering programmatic changes initiated by federal funded projects in local school districts. They are (1) community and cultural processes, and (2) equalization of educational opportunities.

Childs (1958) explicated two purposes of schools: (1) to interpret and evaluate the ways of life and the thought of its society and (2) to prepare the young for responsibility to preparing the young for the "unknown" amid the changing affairs of a dynamic society. The process of cultural interpretation and evaluation becomes more difficult in a period of cultural transition. Cultural transition is a period when changes in life conditions have become so fundamental and extensive that traditional practices are no longer competent to organize and regulate the group activities upon which the group depends. In such a transition period the re-examination of established norms and practices becomes imperative when the historic social system postulates fail to be verified when repeatedly put to the test of group action.

One of the most crucial issues in central city schools today is community control. There is a surge of concern as more and more communities see education as social capital. They see a sound educational system for their young as the key to economic and social survival in a modern mechanisic technological society in rapid transition.

The point of controversy is power and control. The parties in dispute are big-city education bureaucracies and newly emerging community organizations with parent participation.

Central to federal intervention, and decentralized decision making is the issue of finance and equalization of educational opportunities. In theory (Hillway, 1961) every American child is assumed to deserve educational opportunities equal to those available to other children. The fact, however, is that educational opportunities are not equal. Some communities operate excellent schools, while others, by design or the lack of funds operate substandard schools making it difficult for its participants to gain survival skills or social capital.

Historically, federal intervention into education has been through national defense programs, and more recently through social programs which have had minimal impact. The limited effect has been mainly due to a lack of agreement in processes, and the willingness of states and local education agencies to implement programs that are nonscientific. They are not well thought out as to what the specific outcomes will be and what might be unexpected outcomes.

The qualitative and quantative difference in which program activities under P.L. 94-142 (disruptive youth not covered under this law) varies from state to state. It is expected that variations on tradition teaching activities will be more carefully studied and more slowly implemented. One reason for the slow implemention of variations on old activities is that they are no longer new or radical and do not receive as much attention as they did at first. When educational programs are no longer radically new they not only receive less publicity they also receive less and less fundings over time (Andrews, 1977).

A second reason is that there is little or no evidence that they (traditional programs and variations of them) have any significant effect on academic achievement or behavior. However, some experts noted that:

> a number of educators believe, some of the educational concepts of Public Law 94-142 are valid for all students... for example, the ability to structure educational programs to the individual needs of learner (Clair, Hagerty, and Merchant, 1979).

Never-the-less, investigators and investigations are severly criticized when their findings are incongruent with expected outcomes when "special" techniques were applied. Belmont and Birch (1975), identified children who will have difficulty in learning to read, either before or at the time they enter first grade. The mean age was 6.2 and all four groups received regular classroom instruction plus remedial reading instruction; placebo in the form of play activities not directly involving reading or planned sequences of perceptual training; no special treatment. The placebo and supplemented groups received four daily one-half hour sessions per week outside the classroom for seven months in subgroups of five or six children. The teachers knew which children were receiving special attention, they did not know which type of a program a child was receiving.

The study lasted seven months. When retested on the Wide Range Achievement Test, and in addition given the Metropolitan Achievement Test and the Gates-MacGintie Reading Test, there was no evidence that the developmental lag was overcome by special intervention. They were neither helped nor hindered by the special instruction, they caught up to their earlier-achieving classmates just as did those who received the placebo or no special treatment.

The conclusion about this study is that it provided no support for special instructional supplementation in the either perceptual training or remedial reading for children of the type and age studied. However, this does not mean that the instructional supplementation might not be effective with other kinds of children. Conversely, one cannot argue for those special interventions that work with troubled children because they worked with exceptional children. The above study was presented to exemplify what remains to be done. In reference to a common body of practice for teachers it remains to be defined as to what instructional methods may be worthwhile or show promise and the usefulness of the procedures must be assessed by further study with specifically defined populations. Linthicum (1977) significantly summed up the problem:

> Educational decisions today have become more difficult to assess and measure. No longer are education related problems confined to one clear-cut level or discipline. Educational leaders, both lay and professional, have come to realize that politics do influence education. These decision makers need information that is reliable, to the point, and timely; more and more they are turning to their own systems or institutions for a better understanding of alternative solutions... Faculties, in many cases, have retreated behind association contracts and tenure agreements, making change and innovation difficult if not impossible. Curriculum patterns are being challenged on all fronts with demands to go "back to basics," and citizens are advocating more active involvement in educational matters. Not only are they becoming active in areas such as textbook selection, but also they are active in the development of new programs in continuting and higher education.

The list of competencies needed by teachers is phenominal and still growing as more and more inservice needs assessment surveys are being conducted. The Warner survey (1977) adds support for the need for more systematic research in the classrooms. There were twenty competency questions to be rated by 300 Texas educators. Of these twenty questions, five were about the need for classroom research. The five questions were; (1) Assist teachers to gather and utilize relevant date about school, classroom and community environments, (2) Assist teachers to translate knowledge of current educational research and development into instructional practices, (3) Assist teachers to understand and use techniques and instruments designed to diagnose students' academic and social development needs, (4) Assist teachers to evaluate instructional effectiveness by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data on teacher and student behavior, and (5) Facilitate research studies on teaching and learning. The significance of this survey was that a large percent (25%) of the competency questions were related to the need for research skills.

The other competencies in the survey were to assist teachers to:

1. develop interpersonal skills effective communication with students, colleagues, and school constituencies.

2. understand and work effectively with different socio-economic/ethnic/ cultural groups.

3. develop a personal teaching style consistent with their philosophy.

4. improve their understanding of basic concepts and theories of subjects they teach.

5. design, develop & maintain environments that facilitate learning.

6. develop instructional goals and objectives.

7. develop and/or adapt instructional programs and materials.

8. select and utilize various strategies and models of teaching e.g., concept development, inductive procedures, non-directive teaching.

9. design and implement personalized learning plans.

10. develop effective leadership skills.

11. understand and use effective techniques of classroom management.

12. develop implement and assess continuing individual professional plans.

13. plan and conduct individual professional growth plans.

14. recognize the existence of personal problems that affect a teacher's instructional affectiveness, and initiate appropriate referral process.

15. demonstrate effective planning, organization, and management skills.

Upon completion of training programs teachers should possess suitable knowledge and skills to work effectively with educational, correctional, social and other agencies engaged in rehabilitation of disruptive, delinquent or socially maladapted youth. Some of the suitable knowledge and skills are: are:

1. teaching strategies which are effective in increasing literacy and computational skills of youth displaying disruptive and antisocial behavior.

2. culture of poverty and the social forces which encourage and/or support delinquent and antisocial behavior.

3. types of behavior and attitudes which are considered to be developmental and/or dysfunctional in adolescents.

4. the types of learning disabilities which are likely to retard learning.

5. criminal justice system, including its component parts (police, probation and courts).

6. rationale and techniques used in counseling delinquent populations.

7. usual responsibilities of the teacher practitioner (planning and implementing teaching strategies and the evaluation of learning outcomes).

8. fundamentals of appropriate curriculum construction including approaches to the individualization of instruction and the selection of curriculum materials which enhance the self-image of the student.

9. philosophical assumptions underlying educational practice and process, with specific emphasis upon the efforts of society to provide stability and continuity to life through provision of institutional measures.

10. processes whereby rehabilitation in the context of school, family, and community is accomplished in the disruptive and delinquent.

Teacher Behavior Criteria

11. Demonstration of teaching strategies which raise the basic literacy and computational skills of students who are educationally disadvantaged in these areas.

12. Ability to respond to adolescents who exhibit patterns which are anti-social and which foster delinquency.

13. Capacity to cope effectively with behavioral dysfuntions in adolescents.

14. Skills in the remediation of learning difficulties.

15. Capacity to function in concert with those who perform other roles in the social remediation process in closed correctional settings.

16. Ability to perform auxiliary counseling functions under the teacher-learner strategies.

17. Ability to select and design learning materials and sequences which facilitate individualization of instruction and which enhance the self-image of the client.

18. Demonstration of the adoption of acceptable personal philosophy of remedial education.

19. Capacity to participate effectively as part of the team devoted to social restoration of alienated youth.

20. Capacity to work with delinquency-prone youth in developing positive attitudes in an open community setting.

Klausmeier and Goodwin (1971) reported that Gorwin pointed out that there was some doubts that a single teacher can perform all educational tasks in a self-contained classroom due to the knowledge explosion. This implies teaming with an assorted group of professionals and quasi-professionals.

> To achieve professional status teachers must demonstrate that they have acquired specialized knowledge and abilities that other groups do not have. No one teacher can be expected in all facets of the curriculum, instruction, measurement, home-school relations, etc.; instead, specialization is required.

Other complications were pointed out by Daly (1979) such as the burden of large class sizes and formidable paperwork. He emphasized that the whole IEP process was time consuming and mindboggling. He added that good management and sufficient funds are essential and not always evident. As a matter of fact, he stated that both money and administrative commitment were the major problems.

Nevertheless, the key to the education of all handicapped children lies in the mandate to develop IEPs, Individualized Education Programs for all handicapped children. Eminent in the Individualized Education Program is individualization of instruction. Individualization of instruction is defined as a combination of teacher, resources time and the learner on the most appropriate task possible for the learner.

Individualization of instruction was appreciabally explicated in 1971 by Klausmeier, Sorenson and Quilling. Individualization objectives were:

1. Planning instructional programs which allow each student to progress at his own rate.

2. Providing instructional materials which can accomodate individual learning styles.

3. Organizing modes of instruction to suit each child's best learning style.

4. Matching teachers and students so that each student has the help of the teacher who best suits him for each specific learning task.

In addition to the general acquistion of knowledge and skills. Haisley & Gilberts (1978) outlined the following knowledge and skills relative to Public Law and its implications for teacher training programs:

- knowledge of laws regarding the handicapped.

- knowledge of handicapping conditions

- knowledge of P.L. 94-142 - terminlolgy and definitions (e.g., "least restrictive environment", "free appropriate public education").

- understanding of appropriate instructional settings for the handicapped.

- knowledge of child evaluation procedures.

- knowledge of procedural safeguards.

- knowledge of IEP (individual education program) development and implementation.

- knowledge of state and local guidelines for implementation of P.L. 94-142.

- knowledge of least restrictive possibilities.
- knowledge about related services and their availability.
- participate in design and implementation of IEPs.
- Screen: Identify students with possible problems.
- Refer: Identify students who may need special support services.
- Comply with the law requiring non-discriminatory testing and parent permission for individual evaluation.
- Compile information related to students' educational, emotional, and physical functioning.
- Ensure that due process procedures have been met in determining children's eligibility for special services.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent that the circumstances and environments that surrounds getting an education in this generation is more complex than in any other generation. On cannot point to any one set of circumstances, curricula or personnel and make valid generalizations about education, educators, and students. With the so called "knowledge explosion," more urbanization, revised values and standards, more complex challenges will arise for professional educators.

It is also true, as pointed out by Maynard Reynolds in his paper; A Common Body of Practice for Teachers, the present level of teacher preparation is inadequate for current conditions.

In the 1980s, as the school population slightly declines and the supply of teachers exceeds the demand, the profession must retool for the arduous task of developing a viable body of practice which will stabilize the teaching profession. Some areas that will need attention and study are: Teacher Attitudes, Student Attitudes, School Size, Class Size, Inservice Training, Preservice Training and Experience, Staff Development, Release Time, Staffing Patterns, and Course Content.

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This paper was a reaction to Maynard Reynolds' paper:
A Common Body of Practice for Teachers. The paper was widely disseminated to colleges and universities engaged in Deans Grants Projects. Reynolds is a professor of education at the University of Minnesota, author and editor of many books and articles, and he is the director of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped's National Support Systems Project based at the University of Minnesota.